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Spatial Thinking, Gender And Immaterial Affective Labour In The Post-Fordist Academic Library

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to use spatial thinking (space-time) as a lens through which to examine the ways in which the socio-economic conditions and values of the post-Fordist academy work to diminish and even subsume the immaterial affective labour of librarians even as it serves to reproduce the academy.
Design/methodology/approach – The research question informing this paper asks, In what ways does spatial thinking help us to better understand the immaterial, invisible, and gendered labour of academic librarians' public service work in the context of the post-Fordist university? This question is explored using a conceptual approach and a review of recent LIS literature that situates the academic library in the post-Fordist knowledge economy.
Findings – Findings suggest that the feminized and gendered immaterial labour of public service work in academic libraries—a form of reproductive labour—remains invisible and undervalued in the post-Fordist university and that academic libraries function as a procreative, feminized spaces.
Originality/value – Spatial thinking offers a corrective to the tendency in LIS to foreground time over space. It affords new insights into the spatial and temporal aspects of information work in the global neoliberal knowledge economy and suggests a new spatio-temporal imaginary of the post-Fordist academic library as a site of waged work.
Keywords – Spatial thinking, Space-time, Gender, Academic librarians, Immaterial labour, Affective labour, Public service, Post-Fordism, Globalization, Knowledge economy,
Paper type – Conceptual paper

Introduction: Time, Space, and LIS

Recent work in LIS draws attention to the ways in which time informs our understanding

of information practices, systems, policies, institutions, and discourses (e.g., Bossaller,

Burns, and VanScoy, 2017; Davies and McKenzie, 2002; Drabinski, 2014; Hartel, 2010; A.

Hicks, 2020; D. Hicks and Schindel, 2016; McKenzie and Davies, 2010, 2015; McKenzie,

Davies, and Williams, 2014; Nicholson, 2016; Savolainen, 2006). While this work makes an

important contribution to the field, by and large however, it fails to consider the interrelatedness of space and time in our lived experience. This is to say that despite the preponderance of "arguments for treating libraries as 'places' and considering information in 'networks' in the LIS literature" (Downey, 2007, p. 685), very few LIS scholars embrace the spatial turn, widely adopted across disciplines, that seeks to balance the tendency in the social sciences to foreground "historical thinking" (Soja, 2010) by bringing into relief the various ways that "space matters" (e.g., Buschman and Leckie, 2007; Downey, 2007; Nicholson, 2019a). This disconnect leaves LIS at a critical and theoretical disadvantage, lacking "the tools to conceptualize… rapid change in the spatial and temporal aspects of information production, organization, distribution, and consumption" (Downey, 2007, p. 684). Stevenson (2011) likewise argues that LIS researchers and practitioners struggle to grasp the impact of "the fundamental social change" that globalization, information and communications technologies, and the neoliberal project enact upon the field (p. 773). In this conceptual paper, I seek to address this disconnect by using spatial thinking as a lens through which to examine the impact of neoliberal globalization on academic librarians' labour. The research question informing this paper asks, In what ways does spatial thinking help us to better understand the immaterial, invisible, and gendered labour of academic librarians' public service work in the context of the post-Fordist university? This question is explored using a conceptual approach and a review of recent LIS literature that situates the academic library in the post-Fordist knowledge economy.

This article is divided into two parts. I begin by outlining the spatial-temporal imaginaries that underlie discourses of globalization and their impact on higher education and academic libraries. I then review recent LIS scholarship that explores the ways in which the socio-economic conditions and values of the post-Fordist academy work to diminish and even subsume the immaterial affective labour of librarians (Sloniowski, 2016; Allison-Cassin, 2020; Revitt, 2020). While this work employs disparate theoretical and conceptual frameworks, it shares a common intent to highlight "the fraught relationships" between capitalism, technology, "and the feminized/gendered work of librarians" (Allison-Cassin, 2020, p. 411), and the ways these relationships devalue and erase librarians' immaterial labour as reproductive labour. In various ways, and to varying degrees, this work allows us to see the library—and the librarian—as a node within the flows of global capital and information, suggesting a new spatio-temporal imaginary of the post-Fordist library workplace as a procreative, feminized space.

Spatial Thinking: A Conceptual Framework for Labour in the Post-Fordist Knowledge Economy

"Spatial thinking" (Soja, 2010) asserts that space, like time, is a social construction, fundamental to our understanding of history and culture; "human life is in every sense spatio-temporal, geo-historical, without time or space, history or geography, being inherently privileged on its own" (Soja, 2010, p. 16). Spatial thinking rejects the dualism that associates time with progress, civilization, science, politics, and reason on the one

hand, and space with stasis, reproduction, nostalgia, aesthetics, and the body on the other (Massey, 1992, p. 73). It further asserts that space and time are dialectically produced and reproduced through social practices (Lefebvre, 1991). Space is fluid and differentiated, "a world of flows of goods and people and information and money" (Thrift, 2003, p. 97), continually made and remade through networks, connections, and interactions from the local to the global (Massey, 1992). Spaces and places are not simply bounded and coherent, they are also "open, discontinuous, relational and… internally diverse" (Robertson, 2009, p. 8). As a result, spatial thinking allows us to see that "libraries are not just *places* in the sense of cultural, social, and communal sites, but also… *spaces* of important but fragmented social action, connected to endless digital realms and diverse representational schemes" (Downey, 2007, p. 721, original emphasis). Through social, technological, and spatial networks, local places and spaces such as universities and academic libraries become caught up in broader information practices and processes at various scales: standards, accreditation, assessment, and rankings, to name a few.

Lefebvre (1991) advances a theoretical framework, or spatial triad, for understanding the production of space through spatial practices. Space is conceived, i.e. "thought of, designed, planned, redesigned, maintained, etc."; perceived, i.e. "interpreted and having meanings and rules" (Liu and Grey, 2018, p. 644); and experienced or lived through interactions. In the academic library context, conceived space can be understood as "the abstracted domain of maps, floor plans, rules, regulations, controlled vocabularies, standards and the myriad other bureaucratic frameworks that govern social environments"

(Payne, 2018, p. 154). Perceived space, or the affective dimension of library space, may be associated with feelings of anxiety (Mellon, 1986), nostalgia (Radford, Radford, and Lingel, 2015; Santamaria, 2020), and awe (Radford, Radford, and Lingel, 2015; Ettarh, 2018; Santamaria, 2020); being active, creative, self-regulating, and entrepreneurial (Hancock and Spicer, 2010); or feelings of exclusion or being out of place (Brook, Ellenwood, Lazzaro, 2015; Santamaria, 2020). Lived space, the "space of daily activities," includes "the pathways of daily rituals, habits, patterns and routines" (Payne, 2018, p. 154). As Cresswell (2004) observes, places, such as universities, "are never established"; instead, they are performed and reproduced on a daily basis "by people conforming to expectations about what people do at university—visiting the library, taking exams, attending class" (p. 38). Rather than "a rigid categorization of types of space," the three parts of the triad represent interrelated interactions and processes through which space is produced (Liu and Grey, 2018, p. 645).

Discourses of globalization enact particular "spatiotemporal imaginaries," "connections between space and time" (Talburt and Matus, 2014, p. 787) that over-determine our understanding of globalization itself,

> a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact, generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power. (Held, 1999, p. 16)

For example, in mainstream "speed theory," a line of critical inquiry that considers the impact of capital and technology "on the democratic fate of a sped-up globe" (Sharma,

2014, p. 5), globalization is understood as a temporal-spatial phenomenon—time is perceived to be "more critical" relative to space (Sheppard, 2002, p. 309). According to this universalizing narrative, in our "chronoscopic" hyper-accelerated society (Hassan, 2003), socio-cultural institutions and processes at various scales become synchronized to the "24/7" temporal rhythm of neoliberal globalization. The multiplicity of our temporal experiences is flattened as space collapses and time becomes accelerated for all. In contrast, drawing on Harvey's (1989) concept of the spatial fix, the continuous reorganization of space by capital in response to chronic crises of overaccumulation, critical human geographers conceptualize globalization as a spatial-temporal phenomenon occasioned by the shift from a Fordist regime of accumulation to a "flexible" one (Harvey, 1989) in the 1960s and 70s. "Space is continually restructured and produced under capitalism, both in the abstract as a commodified space/time (Harvey 1996), and as a concrete spatial fix for the crises of capitalism (Harvey 1982)" (Sheppard, 2002, p. 310). Even Castells, who underscores the importance of temporal changes occasioned by the "network society," argues that "space shapes time in our society, thus reversing a historical trend" (Castells, 1996, p. 465 cited in Sheppard, 2002, p. 310).

Feminist, queer, and postcolonial theorists understand space and time to be sites "of material struggle and difference" (Sharma, 2014, p. 9) through which power and positionality are relationally constructed. This understanding is informed by Lefebvre's (1991) conception of space and gender as interrelated social constructions that "evolve constantly in interaction with political, economic, and historic forces" (Liu and Grey, 2018,

p. 645). Doreen Massey (1993) advances "the power-geometry of time-space compression" to conceptualize "power in relation to the flows and the movement" of capital (p. 62) and "the differential geographies of groups stratified by gender, race, disability, sexuality, religion and so on" (Kichin, 2016, p. 815). Power-geometry allows us to account for the socio-spatial processes *beyond* capital that set rules and define boundaries. Sheppard (2002) employs the feminist concept of positionality to emphasize the dialectical relationship between space and place, global and local, and the ways that power is experienced across geographic and "social axes of difference" (p. 318). Places are complex "ensembles of material objects, workers and firms, and systems of social relations embodying distinct cultures and multiple meanings, identities and practices" (Hudson, 2001, p. 255 cited in Robertson, 2009). Building on Massey's work, Sharma (2014) puts forth "power-chronography," a political economic account of time that acknowledges that our experience of time—our temporality—is "produced at the intersection of a range of social differences and institutions" (p. 28) and "complicated by the labor arrangements, cultural practices, technological environments, and social spaces" of global capital (p. 9). Gender, race, and class play a determining role in these experiences and the meanings and values attributed to them. Temporality is experienced both relationally and intersectionally; some people's experiences are maintained and normalized through the temporal labour of others. For example, while the frequent flier is kept "up to speed"— "plugged in, connected . . . and ready to do business" (p. 36)—by a complex temporal infrastructure of "technologies, commodities, programs, and laborers" (p. 44), the taxi

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driver who shuttles clients to and from the airport experiences "temporal recalibration": "periods of waiting punctuated by bursts of intensive activity" and irregular work shifts (Nicholson, 2019b, p. 134). In a similar vein, postcolonial scholar Riyad Shahjahan (2015) argues that as "an epistemic tool," time enacts "a chronology of difference" used to label Indigenous and other subaltern groups as "slow," "lazy," "primitive," "out of sync," and "resistant to progress" (p. 491). Linear Eurocentric time colonizes and erases other forms of time and other temporalities with the result that "most of the world's people and their knowledge came to stand outside of history" (p. 491).

In related work, Gregg (2018) considers the role of technology and time in salaried and non-salaried work in the post-Fordist gig economy. Through technology—and platform capitalism in particular—labour is "globally mediated and persistently racialized" (p. 6). Moreover, Gregg observes, in a context of widespread job insecurity "the digital personal assistant—the TaskRabbit, the Uber driver, and the Turk worker—provides the technical means by which class privilege can be maintained" (p. 5). Our preoccupation with time management thereby serves "to displace anxiety about a much larger concern than mere productivity… [namely] the sense that we may have reached the end of a certain kind of salaried worker, whose experience of time… served as an enduring index of modernity" (p. 8).

Regimes of Accumulation as Spatial-Temporal Practices

From the discussion above, we can intuit that regimes of accumulation are also spatial and temporal practices that encode particular social relations. According to Lefebvre (1991), "every mode of social organization produces an environment that is a consequence of the social relations it possesses. In addition, by producing a space according to its own nature, a society not only materializes into distinctive built forms, but also reproduces itself" (Gottdiener, 19934, p. 132). The "structural coupling" of mode of production with social regulation with "institutional forms, procedures and habits which either coerce or persuade private agents to conform to its schemas" (Lipietz, 1987, p. 33, cited in Stevenson, 2011, p. 775) ensures "the temporary stabilization of capitalism as a system of social and economic integration" (Stevenson, 2011, p. 775). For example, mass consumption, upon which Fordist mass production depends, is achieved not only by improving the conditions of the working class through collective bargaining and organized labour, the creation of a welfare state, and Keynesian macroeconomic policies, but also by inculcating in workers "a new set of values, which equated quality of life issues with the ability to purchase the commodities they produced," effectively managing surplus value (Schoenberger, 1988; Stevenson, 2011, p. 776). Other "salient features" of Fordism include "vertical organization structures and authoritarian command, an emphasis on scientific management and the fragmentation of unskilled labour into discrete activities, [and] the emergence of large national monopolies" (Stevenson, 2011, p. 776). "Idle productivity coupled with unemployed labor power" (Harvey, 1996, p. 295) and overaccumulation of capital make

Fordism prone to chronic crisis, however; in the 1970s, managing this crisis became "a hegemonic project of global proportions" (Stevenson, 2011, p. 782). This is to say that surplus capital, endemic to the Fordist regime, *requires* foreign markets, leading Schoenberger (1988) to claim that Fordism can be considered to have been a global regime from the outset. At the same time, however, the spatial fix "poses serious problems of competitiveness to the very area in which [Fordism] has been most fully elaborated" (Schoenberger, 1988, p. 248), leading once again to economic and social instability.

Post-Fordism, in contrast, is characterized by "information-intensive economies based on the production of just-in time and customisable products for niche global markets, … highly automated systems, an international labour force, and "a neo-liberal state" (Stevenson, 2011, p. 776). It is made possible by networks, information and communication technologies, flexible organizational structures, work teams, and increasingly technology-literate producer-consumers who "generate new information, knowledge and cultural products for capital's gain" (Nicholson, 2015, p. 329; Stevenson, 2011). In essence, it's "about privatization and market competition in the public and private realms" (Nicholson, 2015, p. 329) and "creating new kinds of workers—highly flexible, empowered 'portfolios' of skills and experiences ready to 'throw themselves heart and soul into the work of the company in risky times'" (Nicholson, 2015, p. 330). Through a "continuous interweaving of technoscientific activity," the labour of commodity production, and "the territoriality of networks," post-Fordism engenders new "times of labour" and "forms of life" (Negri, 1994, p. 89, cited in Dyer-Witheford, 2005, p. 72).

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According to Dyer-Witheford (2005), the "high technology restructuring" that marked the shift from Fordism from post-Fordism offered corporations new forms of social control, "a weapon against the massive unrest that beset industrial, Fordist capitalism" in the late 1960s and early 70s (p. 75). Because just-in-time production, a key feature of post-Fordism, depends on efficiency, co-operation, and coordination, it "enact[s] particular forms of temporal governmentality in the workplace" (Nicholson, 2019c, p. 146). In her examination of time management and salaried workers in the knowledge economy, Gregg (2018) notes that "devolved hierarchies, mobile technology and the push for more flexible working hours mean that time is experienced differently than the iconic 9 – 5 regime" (p. 5). In team-based, highly collaborative work environments, coordinating work becomes "the logistical nightmare of achieving synchronicity," a problem Wacjman (2015, cited in Gregg, 2018, p. 6, original emphasis) describes as "not of time but of *timing*." Moreover, the hegemonic logic of productivity further "justifies the offload[ing of] mundane matters to others" in the name of efficiency, thus "normaliz[ing] asociality and asymmetry in the guide of appropriate professional conduct" (Gregg, 2018, p. 5).

Space-Time and Global Higher Education

Spatial thinking affords insight into the ways that educational spaces are strategically recalibrated, reorganized, and reconstituted through global capitalist logics, "produc[ing] a very different geometry of power" (Robertson, 2009, p. 14). According to Dyer-Witheford (2005), changes to higher education as a site of social reproduction in the 1980s are the

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result of a series of struggles that began with "the post-war expansion of universities to provide the expanding strata of managers, technocrats, and scientists required by high Fordist capitalism" (p. 74). Because it the university served as "a vital node in a circulation of social unrest" that marked the late 1960s and early 1970s (p. 74), the university it needed to needed to be both pacified and restructured; "after the immediate discipline of police action, shootings, and academic purges, the neoliberal response was radical reorganization" (Dyer-Witheford, 2005, p. 75) of higher education in service of capital. "Capital becomes more intellectual; universities become more industrial" (p. 76).

> Over the last twenty-five years, the universities of advanced capitalism have been metamorphosed, the shell of the ivory tower broken, and higher education firmly entrained to market-driven economic growth - in particular, to the development of high-technology industries. Universities are now frankly conceived and funded by policy elites as research facilities and training grounds for the creation of the new intellectual properties and technocultural subjectivities necessary to a post-Fordist accumulation regime. (Dyer-Witheford, 2005, p. 71)

The "rapprochement" (Dyer-Witheford, 2005, p. 76) of industry and higher education is facilitated by the policies and practices of new public management, which introduce regimes of competition, private sector management practices, and austerity and accountability measures, including a reliance on standards and performance indicators and a focus on outputs (Hood, 1991, 1995; Olssen and Peters, 2005; Robertson, 2009, 2012; Shore, 2008). These logics represent both the foundation and the outcome of the global higher education market. While higher education discourse portrays globalization "as a nebulous, chaotic imperative to which universities must respond (Nicholson, 2019a, p. 4),

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an 'abstract, global space 'out there'" (Matus and Talburt, 2009, p. 516), universities nonetheless play an active role in producing the spatio-temporal imaginaries of the global higher education market and reproducing them on local scales.

> The university secures its reputation as "world class" by recruiting the best and brightest staff and students from around the globe, and creating exchange programs, "offshore" satellite campuses, and showcase facilities. The logics of rankings and international benchmarking strategies and instruments situate universities—and nations—on an inevitable continuum of development, giving rise to spatial and temporal binaries such as developed/underdeveloped, superior/inferior, center/periphery (Matus and Talburt, 2009; Robertson, 2010). …. The result is a complex scenario in which the university disavows its role in the production of the very global space it describes. (Nicholson, 2019a, p. 10)

By extension, this imaginary also allows us to locate information literacy, a form of skills training for the information age and an important sphere of activity in the post-Fordist academic library, at the intersection of the local and the global (Nicholson, 2019a).

> In the 1980s and 1990s, when broad neoliberal educational reforms intended to better prepare workers for the information society were introduced in Anglo-American countries, librarians saw an opportunity to legitimate their role within this new higher education environment... Defining information literacy "as a part of the wider literacy continuum" and linking it with the concept of lifelong learning were key strategies librarians used to underscore their value as workers and educators (Tuominen, Savolainen, and Talja, 2005, p. 331). (Nicholson, 2019a, p. 18)

Information literacy initiatives allow the library to demonstrate its alignment with and contributions to the university's strategic goal of "produc[ing] world-class research and prepar[ing] students to be global citizens and workers" (Nicholson 2019a, p. 4); in exchange, the library is granted "a place at the curricular table" (Drabinski, 2014, p. 483).

As Pawley (2003) notes, "ownership" of information literacy, a "politically charged term"

assigns rights and privileges" and justifies resources (p. 424). In this way, information literacy standards and frameworks operate on multiple scales, serving to both "mediate and regulate our information literacy practice across institutions, across cultures, across borders" (Nicholson, 2019a, pp. 19-20) and "facilitate the integration of information literacy into curriculum documents, strategic plans, and accreditation frameworks" (Nicholson, 2019a, p. 20).

Globalization enacts multiple, divergent spatio-temporal orders and subjectivities within higher education. The production of students as knowledge workers, knowledge mobilization, and innovation, key functions of the contemporary university, are accompanied by future-oriented, competitive strategies intended to secure a place for the university in the global higher education sector (Matus and Talburt, 2015; Robertson, 2012). Government priorities, policies, and funding, strategic and fiscal planning, technology, curriculum renewal, and strategic partnerships further impact the space and time of campus environments, both physical and virtual (Moss, 2006). For librarians, increases in the number of precariously employed contract faculty pose an obstacle to "permanently embed[ding] information literacy in departmental curriculum" (Ryan and Sloniowski, 2013, p. 279). "Rising student enrolments and a shrinking public sector workforce," combined with fiscal austerity measures, "have led to poor librarian-to-faculty ratios at many institutions" (Ryan and Sloniowski, 2013, pp. 280-81), contributing to the automation of reference and information literacy services and programs through online guides, tutorials, and chat, and even their outsourcing to consortial partners or library

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vendors. Knowledge work, particularly when performed by women, is vulnerable to automation, which brings "heightened surveillance, routinization of tasks, and outsourcing of tasks to less skilled—and less costly personnel" (Harris, 1992, Mosco and McKercher, 2007; Tracey and Hayashi, 2007, p. 65).

Numerous scholars draw attention to the acceleration of work in the post-Fordist university (e.g. Giroux and Giroux, 2004; Dyer-Witheford, 2005; Walker, 2009; Mountz *et al.*, 2015; Shajahan, 2015). Time is reified as academics internalize the importance of managing, justifying, and accounting for their time (Walker, 2009). According to Gregg (2010), because affective labour, or being "emotionally invested" (p. 189), translates into a willingness to accept work intensification, it is an "expect[ation] of employees in today's corporate university" (p. 183), part of broader norms for "white-collar workers to continually demonstrate their ongoing employability" (p. 187). "Making a virtue" of multitasking devolves the employer from the responsibility of ensuring that workloads are manageable (p. 187). Instead workers' "sense of instability and being overloaded" are normalized and regulated through professional development courses and change management programs (p. 187). By extension, "the extraordinary ability of academics to excavate working hours from a range of times in the day" (p. 189) and their engagement in unpaid work, such as publishing and peer review, "provide[s] a model for the flexible work arrangements now formalised in information jobs across many sectors" (p. 189). "Affective labour explains how the university manipulates the psychological lives of its staff to simultaneously exploit and disguise the 'immaterial' dimensions of working life" (p. 187).

In the academic library, related discourses of resilience, grit, and "doing more with less" have become widely circulated in recent years (e.g., Galvan, Berg, and Tewell, 2017; Lanclos, 2019). Studies by Bright (2017) and VanScoy and Bright (2020) also found that Black librarians and librarians of colour are subject to increased invisible labour, including duties assigned "based on their racial/ethnic identity rather than their professional expertise, such as chairing a diversity committee, or serving as collection manager or liaison in subject areas that reflected their racial/ethnic identity" (VanScoy and Bright, 2019, p. 292). Mentoring and advising students of colour was also a key form of immaterial labour (Bright, 2017).

Nonetheless, because our experience of time is determined by our positionality, multiple temporal orders persist within the academy: "the 'timeless time' of research and scholarship... the highly scheduled and regulated rhythm of bureaucrats; the urgent, contracted time of the academic as entrepreneur and adjunct; the deferred time of education as an investment in one's future career; and the endless time of lifelong learning" (Nicholson, 2016, p. 29). These imaginaries serve to reinscribe "uneven power relations and the gendered contexts of university policy and environments" (Mountz *et al.*, 2015, p. 1238). For example, Mountz et al. (2015) contend that teaching, advising students, and service to the university, service to equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives in particular, represent forms of social reproduction associated with the domestic sphere, with "women's time," a space-time distinct from the masculine domain of "creativity, innovation, and invention – i.e. valorized production and productivity" (p. 1242).

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In a recent qualitative research study, Nicholson (2019b) extends these analyses to situate the affective labour of public service librarians in Canada within the context of a university subject of the spatio-temporal imaginary of the global university. Findings reveal that academic librarians' work had become accelerated and intensified. Workdays were punctuated by back-to-back meetings, one-on-one intensive research consultations, and teaching information literacy classes and workshops. Participants spoke of "burnout," "being overloaded," "scrambling to meet deadlines," and "getting swept away" when describing their experiences at work. They made decisions under pressure, sometimes with incomplete information, and shuffled priorities and schedules in order to respond quickly to faculty and students or to complete institutional projects with short turnaround times. They had little time for reflection and other forms of non-productive work, such as small talk or socializing. As Yousefi (2017) underscores, sharing information by "gossiping," telling stories, or water cooler chat "can be a profoundly political act," a means to subvert established norms, procedures, and assumptions" (p. 98). Because the accelerated temporal order of the academic library works against information sharing, it operates as a way to discipline library workers and "maintain the status quo" (p. 99).

Academic librarians' duties had expanded with the addition of digital services and spaces, such as digital humanities centres or makerspaces, intended to demonstrate the library's contribution to the institutional research mission. At the same time, their work had also become simultaneously more generalized, automated, clerical, and administrative as a result of the addition of new roles and services and the elimination of librarian,

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technician, and middle manager positions. Traditional divisions of labour had become blurred; in some institutions, students answered questions at the reference desk whereas in others, librarians made photocopies to fulfill faculty interlibrary loan requests and issued borrower cards.

Participants managed their time and their work by maintained lists and spreadsheets for tracking and reporting their work and "going for the low hanging fruit," "chunking up" work, and "carving out time" in their schedules. They sometimes deferred work, research or scholarly activities in particular, or worked to a lesser standard than they would have liked in order to keep up. Paradoxically, working outside of or beyond regular hours, by answering email or engaging in scholarship on the weekend, was also seen as an effective way to stay on top of one's workload.

Most importantly however, this study demonstrates that as marginal educators on the university campus, librarians work at "being in time" with the dominant temporalities of faculty and students. To be "in time" is to recalibrate temporally (Sharma, 2014). For example, several participants described the challenges of coordinating online consultations with students in different time zones because these meetings conflicted with their domestic responsibilities, such as child care. Chat reference service, often available outside of regular work schedules, provides a further example of recalibrating: while the chat operator waits for "clients," they experience temporal disruption. Periods of "inefficient waiting are followed by periods of intense activity as the operator synchronizes their rhythms to those of their interlocutor" (Nicholson, 2019a, p. 16). Moreover, because class time is controlled

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by faculty and therefore remains inaccessible to librarians, the abbreviated, instrumentalist, just-in-time "one-shot" information literacy guest lecture, whereby a librarian introduces students to the basic search strategies and select search tools that will enable to complete a given assignment, persisted, despite librarians' stated concerns about its pedagogical effectiveness (e.g. Ryan and Sloniowski, 2013; Nicholson, 2016). Librarians' ability to engage in more critical pedagogical approaches to information literacy "is almost completely determined by the desires, fantasies, identities, opinions, and relations to power of our faculty colleagues" (Eisenhower and Smith, 2010, p. 315). This is to say that recalibrating is also evident when librarians are asked by faculty to give a "tour" of the library website or a "tutorial," which suggest mechanical overviews, rather than "teach a class" or give a guest lecture. At the same time, however, librarians' workloads are such that they also pose a barrier to librarians' desires to develop more critical approaches to information literacy education:

> With fewer people juggling more work, it becomes easy to fall back on database training as the sum total of our teaching efforts, rather than working towards higher level information literacy competencies. ...In this environment, librarian-as-trainer becomes complicit in the formation of student-as-commodity for the market. (Ryan and Sloniowski, 2013, pp. 281-82)

Today, as a result of the widespread shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, some librarians have reported a decrease in the amount of class time they are accorded by faculty (e.g. 30 minute Zoom sessions instead of 50 or 80 minute face-to-face classes) and an increase in requests for just-in-time asynchronous online learning objects.

With the move to working from home, all spaces, domestic and public, physical and virtual have become work spaces. The result is an intensification of work through the regulation of subjectivities, as "online technologies bring an… awareness of work in locations that were once reserved for leisure, which changes the venue for performing a professional persona" (Gregg, 2010, p. 187). Gregg (2018) describes this disintermediation, "when workers and workplace lose their innate proximity" (p. 20) but become increasingly entangled at the same time—think, for example, of the surreptitious and sometimes unsettling glimpses into our colleagues' and students' personal lives and domestic spaces arising from teleconferencing, as "disorganization" (p. 20). The "porousness of work's physical and temporal architectures, exacerbated by new technologies and platforms" (Gregg, 2018, p. 7), is further compounded in this particular historical moment.

Immaterial Labour and the Post-Fordist Academy

In the final part of this paper, I review recent LIS scholarship that explores the ways in which the socio-economic conditions and values of the post-Fordist academy work to diminish and even subsume the immaterial affective labour of librarians (Sloniowski, 2016; Allison-Cassin, 2020; Revitt, 2020). While this scholarship is informed by disparate theoretical approaches, it shares a common desire to highlight the complex "relationships between technology and the feminized/gendered work of librarians" (Allison-Cassin, 2020, p. 411) and the ways that this labour is devalued even as it serves to reproduce the academy. In various ways, and to varying degrees, it allows us to see the academic library—

and the academic librarian—as a node within the flows of global capital and information, providing a new spatio-temporal imaginary of the post-Fordist library workplace.

Public librarians' labour, that of children's librarians in particular, has long been associated with the domestic sphere, a corollary to women's work in the home (Garrison, 1977). "Notwithstanding the many important contributions of individual librarians to their communities and to cultural memory, libraries can be understood as an extension of the domestic sphere, and librarianship a form of waged domestic labor" (Sloniowski, 2016, p. 659). Work performed in the domestic sphere is immaterial, "done mainly with skills related to the mind, emotions, and sentiments, and thus with things that are intangible" (Fortunati, 2018, p. 1), including "affect, care, love, education, socialization, communication, information, entertainment, organization, planning, coordination, logistics" (Fortunati, 2007, p. 144). Moreover, emotional labour, "the management of feeling… to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 2012, p. 7), is an expectation of public service work in libraries (Emmelhainz, Pappas, and Seale, 2017; Julien and Genuis, 2009; Matteson, Chittock, and Mease, 2015; Shuler and Morgan, 2013; Sloniowski 2016), and is experienced intersectionally (Bright, 2017; VanScoy and Bright, 2020).

Using a socialist feminist approach, Sloniowski (2016) examines the gendered division of material and immaterial labour, both analytic/intellectual and affective, in the post-Fordist university. Sloniowski argues that "the production of academic subjectivities and human capital" depends, in no small part, on "the often invisible pink-collar labor of

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academic librarians" (p. 647), thereby relegating them to act as "shadow labor" in service of the academy (Shirazi, 2014, n.p., cited in Sloniowski, 2016, p. 659). "Librarians and archivists provide a form of largely ignored reproductive and affective labor in the knowledge production of the academe and are an unrecognized production culture within the knowledge work of the university" (Sloniowski, 2016, p. 661). Supporting faculty research, teaching information literacy skills to students, and building and maintaining collections is further devalued because it is perceived as feminine care work. Gender also contributes to the ways that the "intellectual immaterial labor" of digital librarianship, typically performed by men, "is increasingly prevalent and arguably valorized as the future of librarianship" (p. 649) whereas the affective, emotional labour of public service work, largely performed by women, is diminished.

Sloniowski (2016) contends that "from a poststructuralist perspective, libraries may also be considered as an extension of the domestic sphere in the sense that they are procreative spaces" (p. 661). As a space that "holds a body of knowledge on its shelves," the library building "requires librarians and library staff to care for its material needs" (p. 661). Moreover, through collection development, cataloguing, and information literacy instruction, librarians' labour serves to "structure and mediate… generative and reproductive" encounters between readers and texts (p. 661). The popular misconception that "finding materials in the virtual or physical library is the result only of serendipity" further contributes "to the invisibilization of librarians' labor" (p. 661).

Sloniowski (2016) extends her analysis beyond the local, noting that in a global context, because the value of immaterial, affective labour is diminished in the post-Fordist economy, domestic work, child care, and public service work are increasingly delegated to racialized migrant communities. The invisibilization of academic librarians' labour provides another example of such devalorization. To be clear, I am not suggesting that academic librarians in Canada—a group of majority white, well compensated professionals who, in the main, have good job security—are subject to the same systemic injustices as racialized migrant workers. On the contrary, when the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, institutions of higher education in Canada moved quickly to a remote environment, and most faculty, librarians, and students continue to work primarily off-campus—unlike library technicians, clerks, and "ancillary staff," such as food services and custodial staff. And, while many public library workers have been required to return to on site work, putting them at increased risk, this is not the case for most academic librarians. In Canada, as elsewhere, the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted members of marginalized and racialized communities, in particular those with "low SES [socioeconomic status], precarious migratory status, non-English or French speaking, or employment in the health sector or certain other 'essential' sectors" (Hanley and Cleveland, 2020). Rather, the point I am trying to make, echoing Sloniowski (2016), is that the invisibilization of academic librarians' work "relates to the very heart of feminist critiques of gendered affective and immaterial labor." Moreover, "the domestic labor debates between doctrinaire Marxists and socialist feminists over the value of different kinds of labor"

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(Sloniowski, 2016, p. 648) provide insight into the value of immaterial, affective labour in various contexts and at various scales.

In related work, using institutional ethnography, an approach developed by sociologist Dorothy E. Smith that "considers the everyday lived experiences of people" (Revitt, 2020, p. 4), Revitt (2020) reveals two "ideological codes" or "universalizing schema" that regulate academic librarians' work, tying it "to the necessary and gendered exploitation of labour" (p. iii) that underpins global capitalism and the domestic space of the library. These codes are "women's work" and "the library," respectively. While the women's work code "constructs the librarian as a content female" and "confines her to the library" (p. 120), establishing librarianship as a natural complement to women's work in the home, the library code fetishizes the library as space and place: "what can be found in the building, what happens in the building, what is accomplished in the building" (p. 197) becomes "the defining characteristics of what it means to be a librarian" (p. 120). (As a colleague pointed out to me, the influence and tenacity of this code is such that librarians have even gone so far as to spatialize the bricks and mortar of the library building by creating digital simulacra of library buildings in virtual environments such as *Second Life*.)

Like the serendipity narrative discussed above, which suggests that library discovery is the result of chance and not the outcome of librarians' immaterial intellectual and affective labour (Sloniowski, 2016), the library code fosters the misconception that "students' information-seeking and research needs are met with the appropriate number of books and journals" (Revitt, 2020, p. 197) and not through the work of cataloguing and

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classification, reference service, information literacy teaching, or collection development and maintenance. The library also works to subsume the labour of the librarian, both symbolically and practically, when it represents this work "as an organizational achievement" (Revitt, 2020, p. 198) in mission statements, strategic plans, scorecards, and all number of other managerialist frameworks. The affective and intellectual immaterial labour behind these numbers, "the inherently pedagogical and academic nature of this very librarian work… is de-intellectualized and de-professionalized" (Revitt, 2020, pp. 198-99), reduced to flat data points in spreadsheets and databases and manipulated for strategic ends in glossy annual reports.

> Nowhere in here is the affective and intellectual labour of librarians and students working diligently together to co-constitute a topic; or the frustration of both with the inherent limitations of mediated technologies; or the student's struggle to articulate that what is not known; or the challenge in determining the relevance of that what is not readily understood, or the anxiety; or the mentoring, the guiding, the explaining, the reassuring, and the encouraging; or the student's effort to integrate, identify with, and find meaning in what it is they are looking at or for. People have completely disappeared. (Revitt, 2020, p. 155)

These data points also mask and devalue librarians' temporal labour. When one-on-one meetings with students are recorded and reported externally, duration is not taken into account; whether a meeting lasts ten minutes or two hours, it is still considered as one "transaction."

Drawing on a 2016 study by Hicks, Revitt further notes that librarians themselves unintentionally contribute to the invisibilization of their "work and expertise" when they "draw on the positive cultural associations of the library as an institution" in describing

themselves and their work (Hicks, 2016, p. 328, cited in Revitt, 2020, p. 142). As a result of this rhetorical device, libraries can appear to function autonomously, "without the skill and effort of librarians" (Hicks, 2016, p. 328, cited in Revitt, 2020, p. 142).

Revitt (2020) contends that both the women's work code and the library code "situate the librarian outside of the classroom and the academic processes of teaching and learning" (Revitt, 2020, p. 200). In contrast to Sloniowski's (2016) conceptualization of academic librarians' work as "reproductive labour," however, Revitt (2020) sees this work as "auxiliary to the productive (real) labour that takes place within the university" (p. 207). This view seems somewhat misguided, however, for as Sloniowski's (2016) close study of the domestic labour disputes in the 1970s and 1980s between Marxist feminists and feminist socialists reveals, "the core question" of "whether domestic labor operate[s] inside or outside capitalist production" (p. 648) has already been effectively addressed.

> Both groups focused on women's role in the social reproduction of labor power through childbearing and childrearing and housework, and usefully argued that women were producing and reproducing commodity labor power, which is 'the most valuable commodity under capitalism because it produces surplus value' (Mann, 2012, p. 135). (Sloniowski, 2016, p. 648).

Revitt later comments, more aptly, that librarians' labour only "*appears* to take place outside of the labour capital relation" (2020, p. 207, original emphasis). Indeed, there can be no "outside": in the post-Fordist corporate university, all work, even "counterhegemonic work," is "subsumed in its Foucauldian way into numbers" as "quantifiable efforts that

demonstrate the library's support of the work of the university" (Eisenhower and Smith, 2010, pp. 314, 315).

Finally, through an examination of the history of librarianship in parallel with readings of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and the 1957 film *Desk Set*, Allison-Cassin (2020) explores the relationship between technology, networks, and "the feminized and gendered work of librarians" to argue that the "disciplining of women's bodies is a necessary instrument of capitalist labor and is intimately connected to the increased use of office machinery and systems of control" (p. 417). The creation and maintenance of information systems, cataloguing and classification, collection development, information literacy, and reference service in contemporary academic libraries "all touch on some form of mediation of information within technological systems" (pp. 410-11) with the result that "the coupling of women's labor with new technologies and the simultaneous devaluing of this labour" established in the Victorian era remains core to librarians' work today. Drawing on Kittler (2004)'s view of universities as post-human information systems made up of hardware and "wetware," i.e. people "'wired' into the university system" (p. 415), Allison-Cassin observes that the feminized work of academic librarianship "requires the giving over of body and mind—becom[ing] part of the system" (p. 411). Library technologies, largely perceived as tools to make work easier and more efficient, quietly subsume "women and their labor, as part of the library machinery, ... into data flows" (p. 417).

By facilitating "the aims of the capitalist information system through the efficient and unproblematic delivery of information" (p. 409), librarians' immaterial intellectual

labour contributes to knowledge production in the post-Fordist academy. This is also affective, gendered, and embodied; "smoothing" the flow of information by making workflows more efficient, and creating seamless connections between information systems and collections and frictionless user experiences is a central focus of professional practice and "the mark of a 'good' librarian. To be noisy, critical, or otherwise frustrate the smooth operation and flow of capital is to be marked negative, angry, and not doing one's job" (p. 411). Like Sloniowski (2016) and Revitt (2020), Allison-Casson underscores that this immaterial work is valued insofar as it demonstrates "measurable positive impacts, thus proving the positive economic value of the library" (p. 412).

The three studies examined above suggest that academic librarians' immaterial Labour, largely invisible and devalued as gendered and feminized, is a form of reproductive labour that serves to smooth the flow of information in the post-Fordist university. The link established between technology and the disciplining of female bodies established with the founding of librarianship in the Victorian era persists; women's bodies serve as nodes within information networks and are subsumed into data flows. "It is the female librarian in particular who connects the system. She is the interface between the data flows. This is the technological embodiment of the librarian, as brain, hands, and mouth are called to serve the flow of information through the system" (Allison-Cassin, 2020, pp. 412-13). When this work is performed by men, it is valorized as intellectual labour and the future of the profession (Sloniowski, 2016). The Library serves as a centre of knowledge reproduction on campus, but it is the heart, not the brain; it is perceived as a cost centre (Revitt, 2020;

Sloniowski, 2016). Moreover, the library itself eclipses the librarian, taking credit for both her intellectual and affective labour—her reproductive work—and disgorging it as quantified outputs in databases, spreadsheets, and promotional materials.

Conclusion

This paper used spatial thinking as a lens through which to examine the ways in which the socio-economic conditions and values of the post-Fordist academy work to diminish and even subsume the immaterial affective labour of librarians. The research question informing this work asks, In what ways does spatial thinking help us to better understand the immaterial, invisible, and gendered labour of academic librarians' public service work in the context of the post-Fordist university? This question was explored using a conceptual approach and a review of recent LIS literature.

Spatial thinking asserts that space, like time, is a social construction, fundamental to our understanding of history and culture. Space and time are dialectically produced through social practices; they are sites of power. The spatio-temporal imaginaries of the neoliberal global knowledge economy have recalibrated, reorganized, and reconstituted universities and academic libraries. Through social, technological, and spatial networks, local places and spaces such as academic libraries and universities become caught up in broader information processes at various scales.

This paper reviewed recent scholarship, both empirical and theoretical, to explore the space-time of academic librarians' information work in the post-Fordist economy.

Findings from qualitative research by Nicholson (2019b) suggest that time functions as a form of neoliberal governmentality; as marginal educators, academic librarians work at "being in time" with the accelerated temporal order of the neoliberal university and the temporalities of faculty and students. Recent work by Sloniowski (2016). Reviitt (2020), and Allison-Cassin (2020) that explores the socio-economic conditions and values of the post-Fordist academy work reveals that librarians' immaterial affective labour is institutionally diminished and even subsumed into data flows, affording further insights into the space-time of academic libraries. Within a spatial framework, one which situates information work in the context of neoliberal globalization, this scholarship allows us to see the library—and the librarian—as a node within the flows of global capital and information, suggesting a new spatio-temporal imaginary of the post-Fordist library workplace as a procreative, feminized space.

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